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How Fear of God Is Reinventing Luxury American Fashion

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Jerry Lorenzo’s L.A. label made him a king of streetwear, but his new collection is something different.
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October 22, 2020

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Jacket, \$1,550, sweatshirt, \$550, sweatpants, \$695, and shoes, \$495, by Fear of God / Sunglasses, watch, and jewelry (throughout), his own

Many years ago, the designer Jerry Lorenzo was in Paris when he was introduced to the buyers at Barneys, the now bankrupt, then essential retailer. At the time, Lorenzo had just begun working on a clothing line he was calling Fear of God, but he didn't yet know much about how fashion houses and aspiring fashion houses operated, which is on a rigid, seasonal calendar: men's and women's collections, released only at a few agreed-upon times a year. When he met the folks at Barneys, he eagerly offered to show them the clothes he'd created, only to find out that he'd missed his window: "They're like, 'Well, it's not our buying calendar, currently, but we can meet you in New York in like a week or so if you just want to come show it to us.' " A courtesy meeting, in other words. Disappointed but undeterred, Lorenzo said: "All right."

At the time, he was mostly known, if he was known at all, for throwing parties in Los Angeles. The clothing he was designing—T-shirts, sweatshirts, flannels, and tank tops in exaggerated vertical proportions—looked, at first glance, like streetwear, the slightly pejorative term for the casual wave that was just then building and has now long since overtaken men's fashion. The man who introduced Lorenzo to the Barneys buyers was Virgil Abloh, who is now the artistic director of menswear at Louis Vuitton but who was then launching his own fashion brand, Off-White, and working as the creative director for Kanye West. Abloh, too, was being taken less than entirely seriously at the time, he told me, referring to the

“streetwear” designation their clothing had received. “To call it streetwear,” Abloh said, “is in some ways to say: That’s not fashion design, what you guys do.”

Lorenzo wasn’t yet sure if what he was doing could be considered fashion design, but after Paris he flew to New York and showed his collection to the department store anyway. What were the rules, the norms, the right way to do things? “I had no idea,” Lorenzo recalled. But he believed in the clothes, which channeled the disheveled suburban chic of *The Breakfast Club* and Kurt Cobain and Lorenzo’s own nomadic American childhood, and as it turned out, so did Barneys. The store made an exception to its own seasonal rule and, despite what they’d told Lorenzo in Paris about how things were done, bought the collection on the spot. “I had the faith from that moment on that I didn’t need to play this game,” Lorenzo said.





In these photos, Jerry Lorenzo wears his breakthrough Fear of God seventh collection, featuring pieces that combine his precise approach to proportion and fit with his newly introduced take on tailoring.

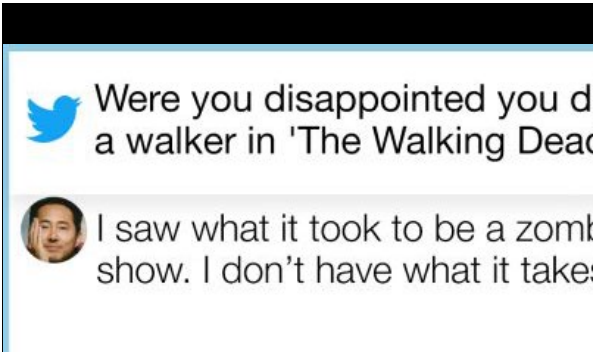
Jacket (price upon request), hoodie, \$595, and pants, \$795, by Fear of God

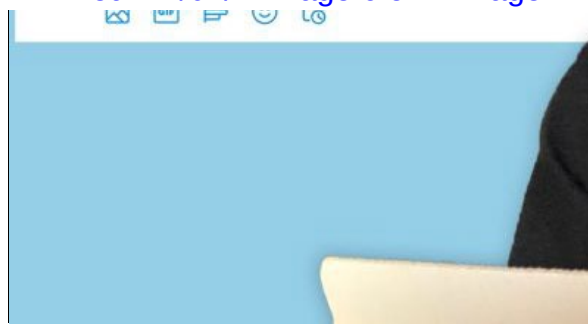
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Over the next six years, Barneys would go on to buy five of his collections as his reputation and business grew. Kanye West, on Abloh's recommendation, hired Lorenzo as a design consultant, a relationship that would last three and a half years and encompass West's *Yeezus* tour, West's first collection for the French fashion label A.P.C., and Yeezy season one and season two. Celebrities like Jay-Z, Rihanna, and John Mayer regularly wore Fear of God, and certain Fear of God pieces and silhouettes—bomber jackets, long-sleeve tees and short-sleeve hoodies, jeans riddled with zippers and holes, track pants that flare at the ankle—became ubiquitous, frequently copied by everyone from Lorenzo's peers to Zara and H&M. “He is often credited as being a pioneer in luxury streetwear,” the actor Jared Leto, who modeled for Fear of God's sixth collection, told me. “But his work is much more than even that.”

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Fear of God may have seemed, for a time, like it was merely part of a trend—“luxury streetwear”—but as the industry has changed and mutated, Lorenzo's clothes have come to represent the center, rather than the margins, of men's fashion. Today, Barneys and much of the old establishment it represented are gone, but Fear of God remains. “I think it's our fault,” Lorenzo told me, only half-jokingly, about the end of the Barneys era. Fear of God and Off-White and other brands founded by Black designers that combined elements of streetwear and high fashion—labels like Hood By Air—may have been gate-crashers when they started, but they were unusually talented gate-crashers. Their success opened the door for hundreds of other streetwear brands and designers, most of whom did not possess either the talent or the drive that Lorenzo and Abloh did. The mistake that stores like Barneys made, Lorenzo said, was in assuming that what he did was easy or repeatable by someone else who might have happened to look like him. “And I just feel like Barneys went in this direction, like, ‘Oh, there must be so many other brands like this,’ ” Lorenzo said. “And the reality is, no, there's not. You've got a few people that have strong points of view in this space. But I feel like after we broke through it was just like all types of brands were in there shortly after that. And I was like, ‘Maybe we're responsible for the death of Barneys in some indirect way.’ ”

Jacket, \$895, and t-shirt (price upon request), by Fear of God

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Lorenzo, who is tattooed and handsome, with the compact build of the second baseman that he used to be, was telling me this story in Fear of God's suite of temporary offices in downtown Los Angeles, where the company is currently at work constructing a new permanent space. He sat at a long table, surrounded by pieces from his seventh and most recent collection. Fear of God employs a few manufacturers in Italy now, to make the tailoring and knitwear that are increasingly part of the label, but most of its clothing is made here, in Los Angeles, where the company works with 13 different factories. Remaining rooted in America, and in Southern California, has been a purposeful choice for Lorenzo. Abloh, after the success of Off-White, eventually went to Europe, the traditional center of power in the fashion world. So did Matthew Williams, another former Kanye West employee, now ensconced as the creative director of Givenchy. But Lorenzo has stayed. Partly, he told me, this is because “in my heart of hearts, I have felt like no matter how good I am—and this is maybe the Blackness in me—but I'm not really wanted there anyhow.”

But mostly Lorenzo has remained in America because here is where his ambitions lie. “My gifts and talents aren't in the

artistic, conceptual expression of fashion,” he told me. “It's more in like: How do you make something sophisticated for everyday reality?” Fear of God may have seemed, at the outset, like something trivial or rarefied, for cool kids to wear, but Lorenzo has always had his sights on something bigger and more universal. He wants, he told me, to build what a key predecessor in American fashion, Ralph Lauren, has built—clothes for more or less everyone. “That's the only comparison that I see,” Lorenzo said.

To cynics, or to those who understand the truly vast scale of what Ralph Lauren encompasses, this might sound ridiculous, but Lorenzo believes it. He believes that the uniquely American circumstances that birthed him and brought him up have made him the man to succeed the most accomplished American fashion designer of the past 50 years. “There was an American point of view that I think he landed on,” Lorenzo told me about Lauren. “But I think now, 50 years post that, the world's a little bit more mixed and the style cues are coming from all over now. Where I feel like his style cues came from maybe one demographic or one aspiration, I think mine are coming from a little bit more of a wider range of American aspirations.”

Coat, \$995, t-shirt, \$395, pants, \$795, and sneakers, \$595, by Fear of God

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Lorenzo still doesn't adhere to the dictates of the traditional fashion calendar—he puts out a new Fear of God collection only when he's ready, usually once every year or so. His seventh collection includes denim and sneakers and a classical, graphic homage to the Negro Leagues, but for the first time, it also contains elevated knitwear, louche suiting, even loafers: effortless but expertly tailored clothes made to be worn from inside, rather than outside, the gates.

Since its unveiling in August, the collection has been hailed by publications from the *Los Angeles Times* to *Vogue* as a breakthrough—“a transitional punctuation mark between ‘emerging’ and ‘emerged,’ ” as the latter put it. The collection takes the same energy Lorenzo had once put behind reinventing streetwear and turns it toward the entirety of the male wardrobe. The statement is as clear as the graphic he might have once affixed to a hoodie: Fear of God doesn't just make T-shirts anymore. It makes anything you might think to put on.

“He is very sophisticated,” said Alessandro Sartori, the artistic director of Zegna, with whom Lorenzo collaborated on a collection earlier this year. “It's not just about one element. It's the combination of materials, of colors, of attitude, of mood—everything is very chic and sophisticated.” Abloh was more direct: “To me, Jerry's latest collection is proof that he's producing, generationally, the pinnacle of new American luxury.”

The particular mix of inspirations behind Fear of God—God and baseball, Nirvana and rap, suburban malls and rare, deadstock vintage—is something that Lorenzo comes by honestly. Born Jerry Lorenzo Manuel, he is the son of former Major League Baseball manager Jerry Manuel and grew up traveling the country as his father changed jobs, showing up every few years as the new kid in a new place. “I've been crossing worlds my whole life, going to an all-white school and

trying to hang out with the small group of Black kids, and also trying to fit in with the punk kids and the skaters,” he said. “And I think one of the things Fear of God has been able to do is take all those cues but just say one thing. We're not saying hip-hop, we're not saying grunge, we're not saying Wall Street. We're just saying: This is American fashion.”

Suit (price upon request), sweatshirt, \$595, and shoes, \$495, by Fear of God

Unlike many of his creative director peers, Jerry Lorenzo actually wears what he designs, and Fear of God's most iconic silhouettes have often come off his own back. The typical style (track pants, jerseys, cozy sweatshirts) and proportion of a Fear of God outfit—slim on the bottom, oversize on top, and frequently layered inside out, short on top of long, as if the wearer got dressed in reverse—are, in Lorenzo's telling, straightforwardly autobiographical. “My whole life, even though my dad's been in baseball, we never had money,” he said, referring to his father's years coaching in the minor leagues. “So, being in certain circles and not having dollars to buy the things that you wanted to represent, I really tried to utilize what I had in the best way possible to have a point of view—whether that's turning my T-shirt inside out to kind of show that I'm not caring, or if that's playing on proportions, with a jacket that says hip-hop and your jeans that say Hedi Slimane.” Jared Leto said, “His work creates stories based on his personal experience, his passions, and his dreams. When you're wearing Fear of God, you're sharing in that personal vision.”

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Jerry Manuel coached for the Montreal Expos and the Florida Marlins before becoming the manager of the Chicago White Sox and then the New York Mets, and Lorenzo grew up immersed in baseball. “I think that's where he gets his inspiration from, from those players he was around all the time, that had that kind of swagger,” Manuel told me. “It's funny, he never looked at the strategy of the sport. He looked at the swag. My other kids, they know more about the strategy than he does. But he was looking at the uniform and the combination with the ballpark and how it was built and what should be on the uniform: ‘The logo should be over here, Dad, and not over there.’ I'd say: ‘I'm trying to win games. I don't care where the logo is!’ ”

The Manuel household was a place of deep faith—the name Fear of God, Lorenzo says, is literal—high expectations, and abiding self-confidence. “There is a scripture that says, in Him we live, move, and have our being,” Lorenzo's mother, Renette, said. “So when you're confident in who you are, you live and you move in that.” She told me that as a child, Lorenzo “was easygoing but extremely intentional with what he wanted to do.”

For years, though, what Lorenzo wanted to do was not obvious, even to him. He tried his hand at the family trade, playing baseball as a walk-on at Oral Roberts before transferring to Florida A&M. “I was all right,” he said, “but I wasn't... If I would've gotten drafted, I would've maybe spent four or five years just in the minor leagues, never would've made it to the big leagues.”

So instead he went to graduate school, getting an MBA from Loyola Marymount in Los Angeles, and then going to work in the Dodgers' front office. Thinking he might become a sports agent, he moved to Chicago for a year to work as one, then came back to Los Angeles in 2008. He worked as a manager for the former Dodgers star Matt Kemp and, for a while, dated the actress Meagan Good, which exposed him to the city's nightlife scene. “We were out every night,” Lorenzo said. “And so I had this Rolodex of, like, not only promoters but nightclubs, and I knew all the socialites just from being out with this Hollywood girlfriend.”

T-shirt (price upon request), and jeans, \$650, by Fear of God

Lorenzo decided to begin promoting parties of his own. “In the same way that I noticed a gap in the market between luxury and streetwear,” he told me, “there was a hole in nightlife where it was either you were going to an A-list Hollywood party and it was all techno music, or if you wanted to hear hip-hop, it was kinda like a hood party. There wasn't an in-between. And me and my buddy were like, ‘Yo, our friends are the in-between. Let's create something where we can all come and have a good time and hear what we want and people are dressed like us and look like us.’ ”

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The parties were successful, but they also took a toll. He was drinking a lot and keeping odd hours. Lorenzo was ambivalent enough about the work that he started going only by his first and middle names. “Some of the things that he went through, that got him to the place where he is now, weren't really things that were satisfying for me,” his father told me. “You know, the parties, those types of things. And to be honest with you, I think that's why he used the name Lorenzo instead of my name.”

Lorenzo began to notice that a disproportionate number of people who were coming to his parties were kids who owned their own brands and that they all seemingly had plenty of money to spend. He told me, “I was like, ‘Nothing against y'all, but if I can dress better than y'all, then I think I should be able to figure this out too.’ ” Plus, the economics made sense to the former MBA student: “I'm leaving, like, making a couple grand a night, and I'm like, ‘Nah, I can sell two jackets and beat that. Let me change my plan.’ You know what I mean?”

So he scraped the money together to have some T-shirts made and came up with the name Fear of God, an acknowledgment of both the faith he was steeped in growing up and his departures from it along the way. Virgil Abloh told me he remembers going to Lorenzo's garage to look at some of the first Fear of God pieces—Lorenzo just pulling samples from cardboard boxes. What happened next was lucky, but it was also validation of what Fear of God was supposed to be from the outset, which was simple, practical, solutions-based. Abloh “left with a bunch of long tanks and long tees, and one thing led to another,” Lorenzo recalled. “He gave it to Kanye, and I got a call shortly after that. But it just came from this conviction of, like, ‘I can't find the perfect T-shirt. Someone else has gotta be struggling with this, you know?’ ”

Coat, \$2,750, t-shirt, \$395, pants, \$850, shoes, \$795, and visor, \$250, by Fear of God

Fear of God clothing is expensive: An Italian-made knit hoodie from the brand's most recent collection retails for \$1,100; a track pant, one of the most influential and consistently knocked-off Fear of God pieces, sells for \$795. Fear of God prices have always been high, a reflection of the quality of both the materials and the fabrication and also of the fact there is an allure to things that are hard to come by, something Lorenzo knows well from personal experience. “When I used to buy Rick Owens, 12 years ago, I couldn't afford it,” he told me. “But it was dope enough, so I found the money.”

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More recently, as Barneys has failed and Fear of God has moved some of its retail operation online, Lorenzo has found that his customers actually prefer a certain level of inaccessibility. “I think the way our customers shop, there's something about a store that gets stale to them,” he told me. “It's like, ‘Oh, God, why are these jeans still here?’ Well, because we replenished them because they sold out. ‘But I didn't want them to be available. I wanted them to be sold out.’ ”

Even so, Lorenzo's instincts are generally more populist than those of many of his peers. “I'm a regular dude,” he told me. “I'm an athlete. I'm not into fashion in that way—I don't follow creative directors or seasons or different houses and geek out over certain things.” Throughout the years, Fear of God has collaborated with Nike, on a very successful sneaker; Justin Bieber, on a line of tour merch; and Disney, on custom jackets for the cast of *Black Panther*. “If I'm honest about my influences, they've been larger-scale influences,” Lorenzo said. “They've been films, movies, platforms that I feel like most of the world has access to. My style isn't from this obscure world of nuanced fashion. So much of what informs Fear of God is, like, mass-available product. It's more in how we put it together and this American point of view that we have on everything.” Lorenzo's gift is less in creating the new and more in elevating the familiar—a useful skill for companies and individuals who want to speak to, and be heard by, as many people as possible.

Lorenzo's fascination with mass-available product led him, early on, to attempt a version of his own: a more affordable and less rarefied version of Fear of God, called F.O.G., that was sold at PacSun stores. “I have more family members that shop in the mall than go to Barneys,” Lorenzo told me. F.O.G. did not work—in practice, it was simply a lesser and cheaper version of Lorenzo's main line, and looked like it—and Lorenzo eventually replaced F.O.G. with what he now calls Essentials: a streamlined but more intentional “little brother” to Fear of God, featuring stripped-down hoodies and T-shirts with prominent logos on them that retail for as little as \$40 and sell out almost instantly.

One day in early September, Lorenzo invited me to attend a fitting for an upcoming photo shoot for the most recent Essentials collection. When I arrived at the photo studio, in Hollywood, he was shuffling through a stack of photos his assistant had printed out, points of reference for the styling and the shoot, which would take place the next day—photos of Andre Agassi in his wild '90s on-court glory, vintage Hilfiger ads, decades-old paparazzi photos of dressed-down stars in airports. Two fit models, on whom Lorenzo would try out and perfect various combinations of the clothes, arrived. Fear of

God has grown over the years—the company now has more than 30 employees—but Lorenzo still does a good deal of the work himself. As I watched, he pinned the reference photos to a whiteboard, hit play on a Spotify playlist—OutKast, Michael McDonald, Mase, Simply Red—assembled a clothing rack, and wheeled it into a fitting room that had been improvised in the corner of the studio, where he began styling the models.

Jacket, \$1,950, t-shirt, \$395, sweatpants, \$695, and shoes, \$495, by Fear of God

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The pieces came in Fear of God's regular color palette—worn-out denim and comfortable sweatshirts in earthy pale greens and sandy grays and gray sands and gray blacks and actual grays, colors to escape notice in but that photograph well—and unbalanced silhouette. As I watched, I thought of something Alessandro Sartori told me about Fear of God. “It's very languid and fluid and romantic, which feels very American,” he said. “That is not a European taste, those colors, that feel and proportion. It's coming from a specifically American color palette and character. It's that California type of feeling.”

After Lorenzo styled the models, they would pose, and his assistant would photograph the look for reference. One model emerged wearing black biker shorts and a baggy green sweatshirt with white sneakers and off-white wool socks, looking like Julia Roberts out for a run in a '90s rom-com. The other model followed, styled in jeans and a gray sweatshirt under a light blue denim jacket with the sleeves rolled up. For a moment, I could smell the suburban-mall Gap stores I had frequented as a teenager.

Lorenzo worked quickly and with a minimum of drama. For a former party promoter, Lorenzo is surprisingly quiet, even vulnerable. It is hard to imagine him raising his voice in a nightclub. He is straightforward and honest about his insecurities and fears and the fact that his time in the white-hot center of popular culture has left him with more than a few bruises.

The early rise of Fear of God was inextricable from Lorenzo's years working with Kanye West, whose personal style, for a time, seemed to merge with Lorenzo's own. “I started working for him because he liked Fear of God,” Lorenzo told me. “I started designing with him on A.P.C., and then he was starting Yeezy, and I was working on Yeezy. At the same time, I'm self-taught, I'm teaching myself how to design Fear of God at the same time, so I'm giving ideas and then keeping ideas, and trying to keep what I was proposing separate from what we were doing together with Yeezy and A.P.C. and the Kanye merch and everything else that I was working on.”

Eventually, the two men fell out. “It just got really tough trying to hold on to my point of view and also share my point of view across everything else that he was doing,” Lorenzo recalled. “And to his defense, I think he was over my point of view after a while. You can see he's constantly evolving in the way he sees things, and I think I ran out of ideas too at the same time, so it's like, ‘Man, I don't have anything else to give you.’ And so it maybe ended weird.”

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Not long after Lorenzo and West parted ways, Lorenzo was approached by Justin Bieber's camp to work with the young pop star on his *Purpose* tour, doing styling and merchandise. In retrospect, this was a crucial moment for Fear of God: Many people first became aware of the brand when they saw Bieber wearing the clothes on- and offstage, and the popularity of the merch pieces Lorenzo helped conceive for Bieber and West would spark an industry-wide trend of merging increasingly coveted tour merchandise with trappings borrowed from more elevated fashion design.

But at the time, it was far from obvious that this was something Lorenzo should do, and he agonized about it. “The Bieber thing was on the heels of working with Kanye for like three and a half years,” he told me. “And I was concerned that the Bieber association was gonna hurt our brand and our positioning, because as much as I love Justin and his music, he just wasn't known for his fashion.” But in Bieber, Lorenzo recognized a fellow person of faith and saw someone he could help. “And so there was a challenge in that, but at the same time, there was a little bit of fear and, like, you know: Is this the beginning of the end of Fear of God? It's like, you were just rocking with Ye a second ago, and now it's like, ‘What happened to this dude?’ ”

Lorenzo ultimately decided to work with Beiber anyway. It was a lesson in humility and in trusting his own instincts. “I was in a vulnerable place, post working with Ye, but I was just like, ‘I know I can help this guy.’ And I'm no longer in this cool-kid club, but I never wanted to be in that club anyhow. So it was just like, ‘I'm just gonna do me, and let the associations fall where they fall.’ ”

The gambit worked; Fear of God took off. And Lorenzo and West have since reconciled, he told me. “We text every other day now. We're in a really strong place as far as our friendship now,” he said. “But I think it took us moving in different directions and us being able to stand solely on our own propositions to say, ‘Hey, with or without me, you would've been fine.’ Either way, you know what I mean?”

In March, when Fear of God released its **capsule collection with Zegna**, the pieces were regarded and hailed as polished sportswear: collarless jackets and relaxed trousers, clothes to be worn to a nice party and then onto the plane afterward, for maximum style and comfort at the event and on the red-eye too. The collection was well reviewed and received by many as a sign that the pendulum in men's fashion—recently dominated by graphic tees and giant sneakers and a pervasive informality, even in theoretically formal spaces—was swinging back toward something more dressed up, or at least more tailored. The pandemic, which arrived shortly afterward, does not seem to have changed anyone's mind about this trend, in part because Lorenzo's innovation was to remove “some of those elements that make those pieces intimidating,” as he put it, and make them “comfortable and effortless.” In other words: more like the shorts and sweatpants we've all been wearing the past eight months.

Still, the irony that Lorenzo (who arrived arguing that the neckline of a T-shirt be taken as seriously as the cut of an Italian-made suit) and Abloh (who told me in 2016 that “the hoodie is the new suit jacket” but who showed his own aggressively tailored collection, LV2, earlier this year) are the ones pushing this particular old trend forward again is not lost on either man. “When we started, our silhouettes or our graphic design or our way of presenting the ideas was maybe a step or two ahead of what we were seeing on the streets,” Abloh said. “And I think as you see us evolve, also the culture of fashion has

evolved. It's a circle. The circle always has to go back and reject things that it once adopted as fact and offer something new.”

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For Lorenzo, the shift toward tailoring and more grown-up clothes—Fear of God's most recent collection, which came out in August, continues the work Lorenzo began presenting with Sartori at Zegna—has come naturally, if slowly. (It took him two years to design the clothes, an affront to the usual, novelty-driven pace of fashion.) Lorenzo's seventh collection has its origins in the same American practicality that has motivated the design of Fear of God from its earliest days. “I think as I'm maturing, I wanna look a little bit more like my age, without compromising or looking older than my age,” Lorenzo, who is now married with three children, said. “And you gotta create that. You gotta design into that.”

As with his hero Ralph Lauren, there is nothing conceptual about the way Lorenzo designs; everything Fear of God does is oriented toward finding answers to the problems that men face in the natural course of wandering around on this earth, trying not to look out of place. “I like to think that those are solutions that people are looking for,” Lorenzo told me. “I think my guy is getting invited to a wedding. I think he has a hard time finding the suit that speaks to him. I think my guy that wants to put on a hoodie and go on a date maybe wants to put on a cashmere or a knit hoodie or something but still have the right proportion that speaks to him.”

As Lorenzo has brought tailoring into his seventh collection, he's done it on his terms, taking everything stiff and uncomfortable out of the garments, which wear as easy and casually as the sweatpants he still makes. Lorenzo trained a generation of men to value comfort and informality; as Fear of God's clothing has gotten more formal, “the idea's still the same,” he said. “I still wanna be just as comfortable. So regardless of what the piece is, whether it's a blazer or a hoodie, the point of view is the same. It's landing the plane between sophistication and comfortability—you know, that could live in a suit, that could live in a hoodie, that could live in a T-shirt with the perfect neckline.” And that could live in all three garments, on the same person, at the same time.

It is a frankly autobiographical way of designing that also extends to the rest of Fear of God's most recent collection, which features a series of minimal, elegant, and refined graphic pieces based on the logos and uniforms of the Negro Leagues, in which Lorenzo's grandfather, Lorenzo Manuel, once played as a pitcher for the Atlanta Black Crackers. Lorenzo grew up around Negro Leagues posters and memorabilia, and the idea came to him early in the work on his seventh collection, that he might pay homage to the league and his own past.

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Jerry Manuel told me he saw a clear lineage between himself—one of a relatively few Black men to ever manage in the major leagues—and his son, whose Fear of God remains one of a relatively few successful Black-owned fashion brands. “In my line of work, I didn't feel that I needed to be validated by someone else,” Manuel said. “I knew what God had put in me. And I felt Jerry kind of paralleled the same way.” Manuel said he particularly appreciated the Negro Leagues pieces in his son's current collection. “He has brought along a piece of our history,” he said, “and still made it look cool.”

Lorenzo told me that lately he'd been thinking of Fear of God's seventh collection as his first. “It's taken me this long to get to a place where I understand what I'm saying from a design standpoint,” he said. “I understand where I'm pulling from. And I'm more and more comfortable with my point of view and where my point of view comes from. And as proud as I am of my background, I don't know that I would be as comfortable as I am today, celebrating the Negro Leagues and having the understanding from a design perspective in how to use only what translates to American luxury.”

Lorenzo continued: “The pure acknowledgment of the Negro Leagues, and acknowledging people that were never given a chance—there's a responsibility of acknowledging them, but there's also the responsibility of taking your opportunity to the highest level, because you know that some people were never even given this chance. So now that I have this chance, I'm responsible to take it to Ralph Lauren heights. That's the goal.”

Zach Baron is GQ's senior staff writer.

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